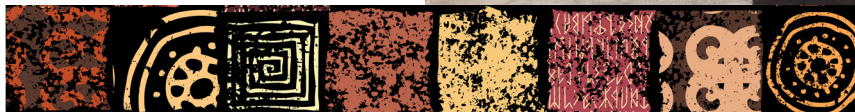
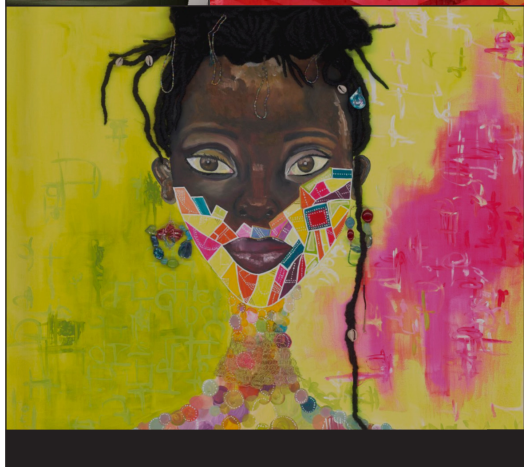
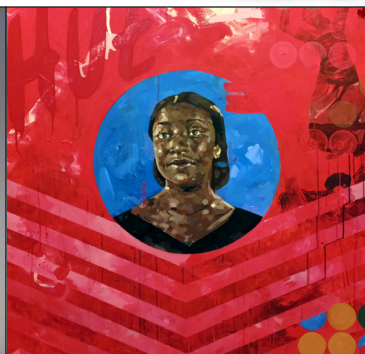
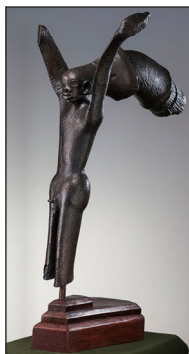
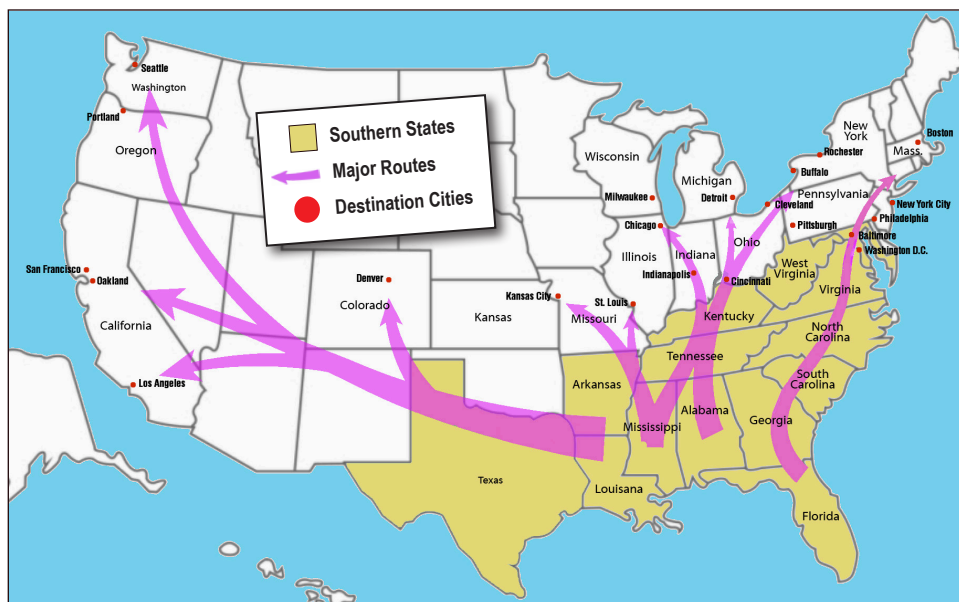


# BLACK ARTISTS OF OREGON

Activity Guide

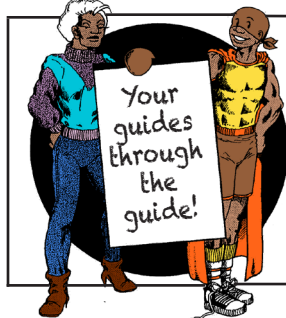


# The Great Migration



This map illustrates the different places Black communities commonly migrated to during the Great Migration. The Great Migration was the movement of over 6 million Black Americans from the Southern United States to the Midwest, North-east, and West. Black Americans left the South to escape racism and pursue better opportunities during the rise of industrialism.

Some elder artists in *Black Artists of Oregon* were a part of the Great Migration as children. Over 43,000 families migrated to the Pacific Northwest for jobs in the defense industries, like shipyards and aircrafts. Portland's Black population increased by 300 percent. Positive changes in Portland occurred due to the migration like the strengthening of civil rights organizations, an increase in services that supported Black communities, and the creation of anti-discrimination laws.



**The Brown Bomber** was created by cartoonist/activist Rupert Kinnard in 1976. In 1985 B.B. was joined by **Diva Touché Flambé** and Cathartic Comics were born. The historic comic strip became noted for featuring B.B. and the Diva as the first queer-identified Black American superheroes. They continue to be steadfast champions for members of all marginalized communities.

# ***Honoring Over a Century of Black Arts in Oregon***

*“Black Artists of Oregon is a heralding of Black presence, interchange, influence, and impact.”*

**—Intisar Abioto, Artist and Guest Curator**

*Black Artists of Oregon* includes artwork from the nineteenth century through today, exploring the lineage and legacy of Black artists in Oregon.



Photo by Renee Lopez

This exhibition is a step towards considering and understanding the presence and absence of Black artists in the narrative of American art history.

This exhibition especially highlights the works of Black artists who produced art during the Black Arts Movement in the late 1960s, '70s, and early '80s. In the exhibition, you will find connections with global movements for Black liberation including the Portlanders Organized for Southern

African Freedom and artists who contributed to Portland's 2020 George Floyd protests. The formation of this exhibition is grounded in Black American practices of listening, keeping, and passing on each others' stories.

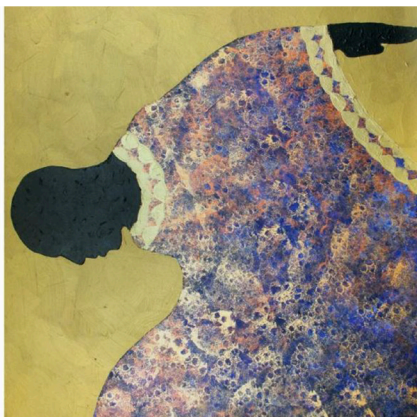
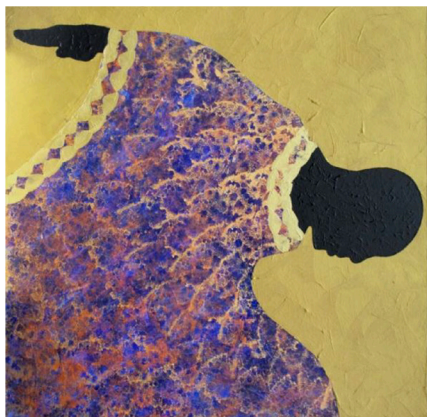
As you walk through the exhibition, please find the artworks featured in this guide, read the prompts and take some time to respond to them, and most importantly, enjoy learning about Black artists of Oregon and their impactful artworks.

## **Glossary**

**2020 George Floyd Protests** - a series of widespread protests around the United States that addressed police brutality after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom** - (POSAF) was a community group founded in 1983 and dedicated to Southern African liberation and ending segregation in that country.





## Guiding Questions

*As you move through the exhibition, you will see that the different galleries, or rooms, have titles expressing the exhibition themes. Consider the questions below as you reach each of the galleries. Write or sketch your responses here.*

### **Collective Liberating •**

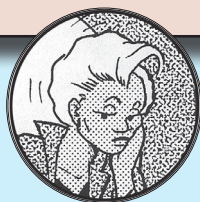
What are some ways that you practice freedom?

**Expanse •** Name a time you lost something or someone you loved. What are things you remember about the person or thing you lost that bring you happiness?

**Collective Presence** • List three valuable things that belong to you and that no one else has the right to take away. It can be an object, an idea, or a feeling.

**Being and Kinship** • Who are the most important people in your life?

**Gathering** • How do you feel after you spend time with the people most important to you?








## ***Collective Experiences***

When going through struggles and hardships, one of the greatest resources is finding others who may have the same experiences as you and sharing community with them. This helps with feeling affirmed and supported when problems arise. The Black artists in this exhibition share a collective experience. Because of this you will see some repeated themes and ideas that are addressed throughout the exhibition.

On the next page is a list of common imagery and themes found in the exhibition that illustrates Black culture and the artists collective experiences. Place a check beside each word when you see an artwork that represents that theme or imagery. When you are finished, you can count the check marks to see how many artists share the same experiences.

*Tip: Some artworks may have more than one theme or imagery used.*



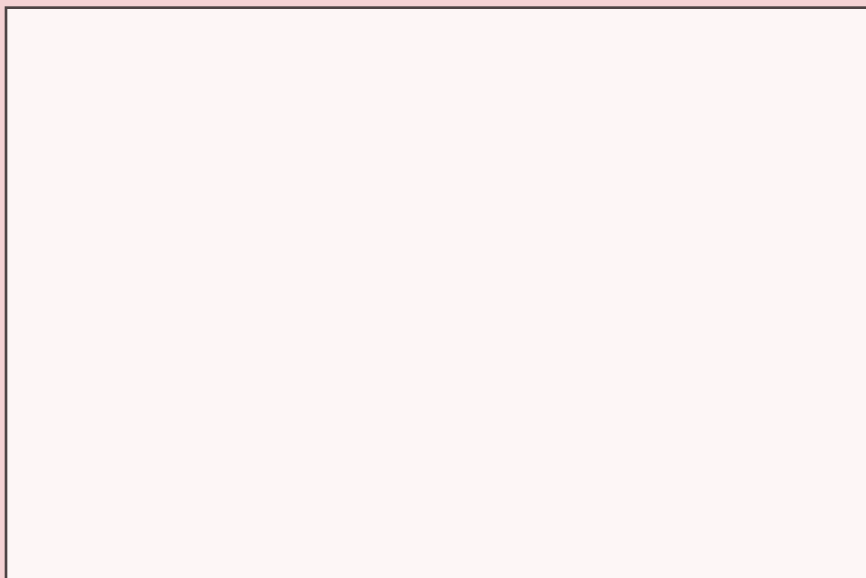
**Geometric Shapes** (Geometric shapes are common in African culture and are often used to tell stories, reference religious beliefs, and share tribal identity.)

**Traveling or Migration** (Black communities have a history of traveling or migrating, whether involuntarily or voluntarily.)

**Dancing or Music** (Dancing and music are common ways communities celebrate cultural identity.)

**Grief or Sadness** (Black communities are often the victims of racism in America which can lead to the loss of loved ones or other traumatic experiences.)

You may also have a shared experience with the artists in this exhibition! Choose a theme above and sketch out your own personal experience in the space provided here.

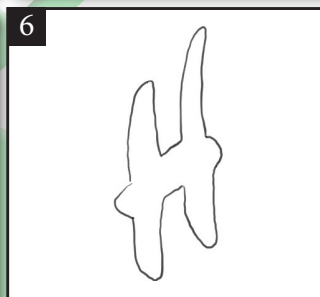
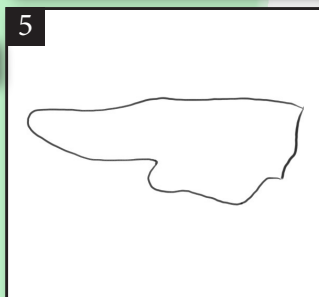
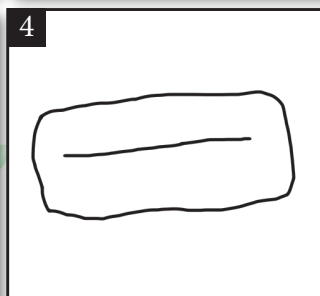
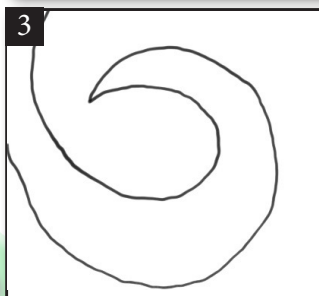
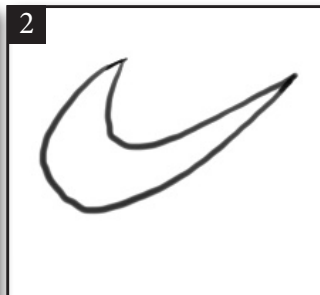
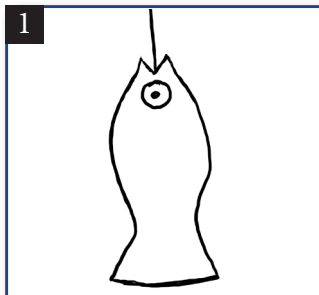


## Glossary

**Affirm** - Offering someone emotional support and encouragement, helping them feel valued

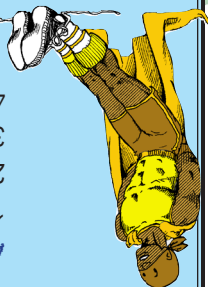
# Seek & Find

Search for these details in the artworks of the exhibition. Circle each item below when you find it in the artwork. Add color to these details at home.



- 1) **Untitled (Two Moons) and Mural Study**, Thelma Johnson Street  
 2) **Sir Jamal Smith**, Otis Quaicoe  
 3) **Mandiani**, Penda Diakite  
 4) **Affirmation One**, Charles Tatum  
 5) **Ibeji**, Bobby Fourther  
 6) **Hue (Street)**, Jeremy Okai Davis

## Answer Key







## ***Intergenerational Conversations***

In this exhibition there are artworks that relate to one another even though they were created by artists from different generations.

One symbol that appears in this intergenerational conversation is the watermelon.



Watermelon emerged as a racist symbol when enslaved Black people won their emancipation after the Civil War. Free Black people grew, ate, and sold watermelons and it eventually became a cultural symbol for Freedom. Southern white leaders became upset and threatened by the Black community's newfound freedom and made the fruit a symbol often used in minstrel shows, depicting Black people as

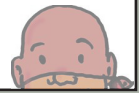
ignorant, lazy, and only finding purpose in performing for white audiences and eating watermelon. This depiction became widespread in pop culture and is still used today to demean and harm Black people.

Compare the representation of the watermelon in Arvie Smith's **The Merry Go Round** with Christine Miller's **Watermelon Self Portrait: Love Letter to My Past Self and Past Values**. Using the box on the next page, write a response showing how these two artworks are similar and different in portraying the symbolism of watermelon.

- What details do you notice about their representations of watermelon?
- Are there things that are uncomfortable about these works?
- Are there things that are beautiful?

As you continue to experience the exhibition, be on the lookout for more work by artists having intergenerational conversations.

Write your response here.



## Glossary

**Emancipation** - The end of slavery in 1865.

**Intergenerational** - Relating or involving several different generations.

**Minstrel Shows** - Theatre performances and shows performed mostly by white actors who painted their faces black for the purpose of portraying and making fun of Black people.



## ***Black Women & Textile***

Quilting and textile art has a cultural significance in Black communities. It was a common practice, in the rural South, for enslaved Black women to be forced to sew clothing for their enslavers. But before enslavement Black women had a powerful history in weaving objects as a way to care for their history and their cultural identity. Throughout Black history, Black women used quilting as a way to tell stories and share ideas, and it is even believed that they sewed and weaved directions and codes of the Underground Railroad into quilts. Weaving and sewing is a valued and traditional skill and, after emancipation, Black women continued to practice it as a way to preserve culture, faith, family, and their stories.

### **Glossary**

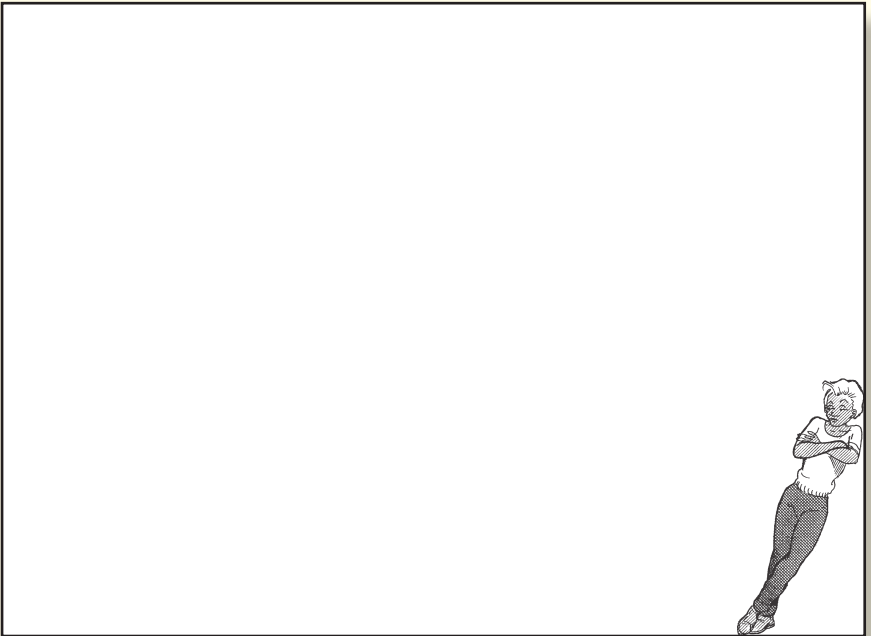
**Rural South** - Southern, agricultural areas of the United States, where slavery was legal until 1863.

**Underground Railroad** - A network of secret routes and safe houses during the time of slavery that enslaved people used to escape from slave states (the South) to free states (the North) and sometimes even Canada.





Look closely at Charlotte Lewis' mixed media textile work, **Isis**.  
What story do you think is being told? What patterns do you see?  
Write your answer here. Sketch a pattern used here.





# Black Joy



An important way Black communities practice their freedom and liberation is through the expression of Black joy.

Because of the history of racism in Oregon, including the Black exclusion laws of the 1800s, Black community members may feel unwelcome. Black joy acknowledges that Black culture and community is an experience of celebration. Black joy isn't to create an untrue narrative of a Black experience that ignores collective pain, but instead is used to introduce the complexities of that experience and that Black people maintain joy and happiness in spite of the difficulties faced when being Black in America.

## Glossary

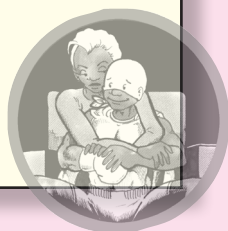
**African Diaspora** - The continued practice and connection to ancestry in spite of the voluntary or involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world during the modern and pre-modern periods.

**Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon** - A series of laws, beginning in 1844, that Oregon passed making it illegal for Black settlers to reside in the state. Being whipped every six months and being enslaved were among the forms of punishment under these laws. The laws were repealed in 1926, but weren't officially removed from the state's constitution until 2002.

This exhibition is full of Black joy, from highlighting African Diasporic culture to everyday moments of the Black community experiencing happiness and family. Find a work that expresses joy. What makes it joyful? You might notice colors or patterns, people's facial expressions, movements, or how they interact with each other, or something else. Think of a time when you felt joyful. How did you express it? Write your answers here.

## Glossary

In the space provided below, add a new word that you've learned from the activity guide or exhibition and write it down here. When you go home, look the word up and add the definition!



Illustrated and designed by Rupert Kinnard  
for The Rupe Group Graphics.

Edited by Grace Kook-Anderson,  
Intisar Abioto and Dori King.

Written by Teena Wilder

### Art Credits (in order)

**Charles Tatum** (American, 1937–2008),  
*Ascension*, 1978, Wood with embedded  
stone and metal, 20.75 x 8.5 x 8.75 in.  
Collection of Patricia Soltys.

**Jeremy Okai Davis** (American, born  
1979), *Hue (Streat)*, 2021, Acrylic and  
One Shot on canvas, 50 x 50 in.  
Collection of Wendy Given.

**Chris McMurry** (American, born 1970),  
*Yellow Body*, 2022, Acrylic, Colored pencil  
and crayon on paper, 37 x 25 in.  
Courtesy of the artist.

**Latoya Lovely** (America, born 1982),  
*Neon Woman*, 2019, Mixed media, 35 x 36  
in. Courtesy of the artist.

**Rupert Kinnard** (America, born 1954),  
*Diva as Portlandia*, 1986, Conté pencil on  
paper, 11 x 15 in. Courtesy of the artist.

**Bobby Foucher** (American, born 1950),  
*Ibeji*, c. 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 60  
in. Courtesy of the Regional Arts & Culture  
Council.

**Sherrian Haggard** (American, 1946–2019),  
*Women of Elegance*, Acrylic on wood, 40 x  
48 in. Collection of Georgeen “GG” Warren.

**Thelma Johnson Streat** (American,  
1911–1959), *Black Kings*, Mixed Media,  
11 x 14 ¼ in. Courtesy of Thelma Johnson  
Streat Project/ Artist Estate.

**Isaka Shamsud-Din** (American, born  
1940), *Rock of Ages*, 1976, Oil, gold leaf,  
and mirror on canvas, 48 1/2 x 35 1/2 in.  
Portland Art Museum: Gift of Roxie Schell  
and Damon Tempey.

**Arvie Smith** (American, born 1938),  
*Merry-Go-Round*, 2020, Acrylic on canvas,  
32 x 25 in. Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and  
Donald Hastler in honor of Ted Smith.

**Christine Miller** (American, born 1990),  
*Watermelon Self Portrait: Love Letter  
to My Past Self and Past Values*, 2023,  
Watercolor on watercolor paper, gloss gel  
mediums, glitter, pressed wooden crate,  
acrylic mirror, 78 x 48 in. Courtesy of the  
artist.

**Charlotte Lewis** (American, 1934–1999),  
*Isis*, ca. 1992, Mixed media textile,  
Collection of Multnomah County Library.

**Adriene Cruz** (American, born 1953),  
*Flying Carpet Coat*, 1981, Textile,  
Courtesy of the artist.

**Jason Hill** (American, born 1976),  
*A Day in Eugene*, 2019, Pigment-based  
inkjet print, 45 x 69 in. Museum purchase:  
Northwest Art Purchase Fund.



Thank you for visiting the Portland Art Museum! Come back soon!  
Youth 17 and under always have free admission.